Government is closely monitoring the situation in Afghanistan and is in close and regular touch with the Interim Administration of Afghanistan to ensure that Indian interests in Afghanistan are fully protected.

Chinese Reaction to US Statement to use Nuclear Weapons

5308. SHRI AIMADUDDIN AHMAD KHAN (DURRU): Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the statement of Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Mr. Lizhaoxing, as reported in the "Hindu" dated March 18, 2002 attacking US for its Nuclear Posture Review and charging the US of nuclear black-mail of China, in reference to the US President's recent statement that the US would use nuclear weapons against 7 countries including China and Russia; and

(b) if so, Government's reaction in the context of deteriorating Sino-US relations and its impact on World peace especially the peace-scenario in South Asia?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) and (b) Government has seen media reports and commentaries on the latest US Nuclear Posture Review. Official statement by the US Government have described the Review as "not an operational planning document". The impact of nuclear policy of the US on its bilateral relations with China is for the two countries to assess. As far as India is concerned, it has been out long-standing policy to seek systematic restraints on use of nuclear weapons through a range of well-considered steps.

Assistance of Afghanistan in farm sector

5309. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Afghanistan has sough India's expertise in sericulture seed processing, poultry, fishing and veterinary services, besides agricultural equipments and help in farm sector;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken to help that country before the sowing season starts?